



**"Lord, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them. You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so mere people can no longer terrify them." Psalm 10:17–18**

**Stop Child Witch Accusations (SCWA)** was formed in 2012 and is a coalition of predominantly Christian, UK-based individuals and agencies supporting frontline efforts to tackle and respond to the reality of children experiencing serious harm or the threat of harm due to accusations of witchcraft.

### Roots and Realities

Small organizations in affected communities are struggling to meet the complex needs of the large numbers of children subjected to these accusations. Few governments or agencies have engaged with the issue with any great commitment or effectiveness.

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At the very heart of the issue are strong cultural and faith-based beliefs. Some church leaders are complicit in the 'deliverance' rites which subject accused children to often brutal and sustained torture. Many other church leaders are working tirelessly to stop the abuse.

All too often, efforts to tackle this abuse have been hugely critical of the Church, rather than engaging with it. Stop Child Witch Accusations (SCWA) believes that the issue must be approached from a faith perspective,

as well as from a human rights one. The Church, often the first port of call for families who believe their child is a witch, must be engaged. There is an urgent

need for a concerted, preventative approach which identifies and directly addresses root causes.

## SCWA's Response

SCWA has developed a multifaceted model.

Local church leaders and other Christian organizations who are seeking to engage with the phenomenon of witchcraft accusations against children come together to create a local working group. The working group carries out research using focus groups to establish local realities, which can be very different from one context to the next. This is followed by the drawing together of church leaders and others of influence at an Action Forum to discuss these realities in the context of Biblically underpinned teaching which addresses the root causes of accusations as identified in the research. The aim is that this should lead to action to challenge and change harmful attitudes and practices through the training of church and other leaders who can then go on to train others in their congregations and communities.

**SCWA acknowledges that it still has much to learn, but its approach has already seen radical changes in individuals, churches, and communities.**

SCWA's aim is to encourage and equip these leaders with effective teaching and training materials, freely available through their [website](#). These materials are currently being piloted in Togo and in three locations in DR Congo, and it is hoped that they will be available in early 2018.

In September 2017, SCWA and some of its colleagues and collaborators will be sending 'expert participants' to speak at a UN Forum on Witchcraft Beliefs and Human Rights in Geneva. This is a valuable opportunity to put the issue of witchcraft accusations onto the UN agenda and to share good practice and the positive role of the Church. It opens up the possibility of strengthened advocacy and of international pressure on governments of nations where these harmful practices are prevalent to introduce and enforce protective legislation.

SCWA acknowledges that it still has much to learn, but its approach has already seen radical changes in individuals, churches, and communities, with stories of people renouncing the harmful beliefs and violent actions which they used to promote and becoming champions for children who are accused. Children who would once have been beaten, burnt, rejected and ostracized are being protected, affirmed, loved and restored in line with God's own heart for children.

SCWA is calling for others to engage with this issue, in prayer and in action, for the sake of the children and the good name of the Church. You can read more about SCWA on their [website](#), and more about SCWA's experience and learning since the coalition came together in a report generated earlier this year ([English](#), [French](#))

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